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A JAPANESE ANTIQUE.

WITH what pleasure we study the delicate work of the Japanese! It has, in truth, become natural that we seek the most unusual and the most artistic of worldly ware and credit it to those far distant people. With the vases, arms, gems of ivory carving, metal pieces and the ordinary phases of bric-a-brac we are comparatively familiar, and so general has been the admiration for these things and so popular the idea of collecting them that it is left now to such productions as the Temple Bells and the Iron Dragon to astonish us. Such unique objects are seldom permitted to leave the Island of Ingenuity, and the masterpieces of ancient craftsmen, so marvelous and incomprehensible in their construction, are kept from Western eyes in a great measure by the care of their fortunate possessors at "home."

One genuine curiosity, however, has found its way to our country, the Dragon shown upon this page. The creature is made of iron scales, so artfully and cleverly put together that no means of juncture is visible, turn it as we will, and we may turn it exactly as we will, for, despite the unyielding nature of the metal, the scales are so delicately hung as to permit the piece to be contorted into almost any shape the fancy may suggest.

The history of the dragon is not less interesting than the article itself. It was made, it seems, in or about 1670, by a personage known as Muneaki, twentieth descendant of the founder of the Miyochin family, most famous armor-makers of the kingdom. The piece was made as a complimentary offering to a high Japanese official, upon his appointment to an advanced position in the country's administration. The intention of the work was to furnish a paper-weight (we neglected to mention that the dragon is about twenty-seven inches in length) of such uniqueness and artistic value as to be worthy the use of keeping in place state documents awaiting the Imperial or viceregal signatures.

The paper-weight remained in the possession,

could be devoted to nothing more elevating or delightful.

It would be useless to recount the products of the agile fingers of these tireless mechanics and artists of the East. They are as numerous as they are marvelous, and as varied in their character. An ivory carving so resembles the hair of a fawn, which it represents, as to be most deceiving in its delicacy, while beside it a bell, massive and sonorous, indicates the wide scope and the equal proficiency of the Japanese worker. Between these two extremes are such varieties as to provide a choice for every taste and leave disappointment quite out of the question. These extremes, and all betwixt them, we found at Mr. Edward Greey's.

JAPANESE TEMPLE BELLS.

"At the sound of the altar bell
The thief's hand is stayed,
'Namu Amida Butsu!' (Hail omnipotent Buddha)
He listens with awed face,
To the solemn reproach,
Then retires noiselessly."

(Japanese poem.)

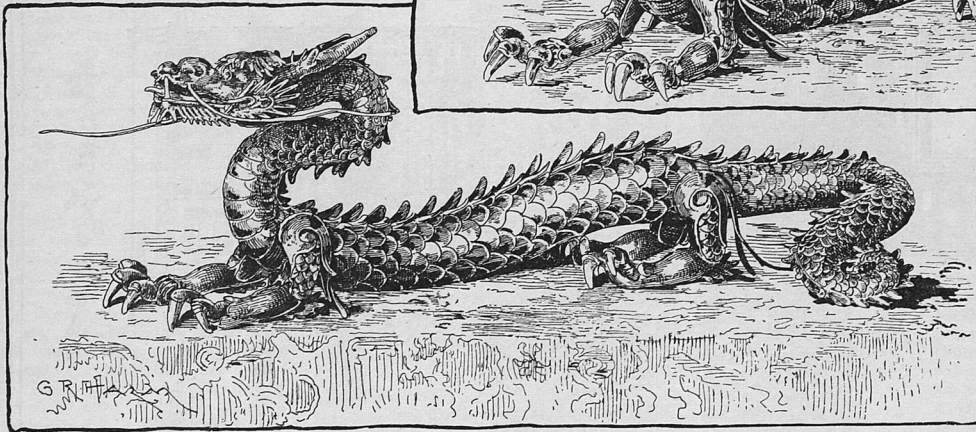
The sounds of Japan are nearly all unmusical to the foreign ear, the exceptions being the laughter of the women and the sweet, almost indescribable, melody of the Buddhist bells. Some of

simply brass bowls, such as had been used for many centuries in India, and were only slightly sonorous. The esthetic Japanese quickly improved upon the Korean bell, by making a peculiar combination of metals which they cast and hammered until they produced the wonderful toned *rin* that excite the admiration of the foreigner and affect their own people so profoundly.

The traveler, on approaching a Japanese temple, often hears a low, humming sound that, upon his listening intently, resolves itself into the one prayer of the Buddhist devotee. Then follows a rapid succession of strokes upon the *rin*, and musical vibrations that are sometimes prolonged nearly two minutes and whenever heard possess the same wonderful charm that caused Mark Twain to say while listening to one of these bells: "I don't believe I shall ever hear more heavenly sounds until I reach the Golden City."

Very many *rin* have the Buddhist prayer inscribed upon their rims, or bear the names of pious persons who united to present them to their temples; others are *ex voto* or in memoriam offerings; some of the dedications being quite touching in their simple earnestness.—*Newport News*.

A CHOLERA remedy never known to fail is obtained from powdered opium, asafetida, cayenne pepper, each one grain, made into a pill, and taken every four hours.



IRON JAPANESE DRAGON, IN POSSESSION OF EDWARD GREY, ESQ.

of one family until early in the present century, when, as a recognition of a valiant deed, or presumed, some worthy act of heroism or devotion, it was presented by the heir of the original recipient to one of the chief men of his clan, whose family were sufficiently imbued with the commercial spirit supposed to have been imported into the country by Com. Perry, as to part with it for a moment's consideration to the treasure-seeking barbarian from our Western hemisphere.

This, in brief, is the record of a wonderful art treasure, a record that may be studied more at length by any one who is so disposed, and which will be found bristling with Japanese names and titles, and early dates not readily understood by a people who live entirely in to-day and working for the purposes and pleasures of to-day.

There are very many interesting and unknown places in this city, some of them lying possibly out of the direct roads of travel, others so modest in outward appearance as to give no suspicion of the treasures existing within them. There is just such a museum of art treasures that the world at this moment is most interested in, to be seen in East Seventeenth Street, fitted up and furnished with all manner of curious things from Japan, by Mr. Edward Greey. It is there we found this dragon, which we have considered worthy of reproduction; there we have found much to occupy a frequent precious hour which we felt belonged in justice to some more tangible occupation, but

the latter, called *tsuri-gane*, are of the ordinary shape, weigh several tons, are wonderful specimens of bronze castings, and are suspended in strongly built belfries; others, termed *rin*, concave in form, are portable, and are used in the temple service, or carried about the country by begging priests.

Beyond their graceful outlines and beauty of metal, there is, at the first glance, little in the *rin* to indicate the high value placed by the Japanese upon these bronze bowls; but no sooner is the slightest touch applied to their rims than their extraordinary qualities are revealed and the listener acknowledges that, in the making of bells, as in many other arts, the Japanese possess secrets as yet unsolved by science.

Although every Buddhist temple in the empire contains one or more of these *rins*, few of those that have been dedicated to religious use are ever offered for sale. They can only be secured after the destruction of some temple by fire, or by the poverty of the priests, who, deprived of government patronage and support, have, of late years, been compelled to rely upon their congregations for subsistence, and have parted, piecemeal, with their most cherished treasures.

The first *rin* used in Japan were brought from Corea, during the sixth century, by the Buddhist missionaries who "peacefully invaded Nihon, and succeeded in converting the mass of the inhabitants to their faith." These antique objects, some of which are still preserved in the temples, were

no pawnbroker's clerk would lodge, bring more than the price of a pawnbroker's clerk's lodgings from the painters. In one new flat building, after about a dozen stories had been run up for residence purposes, an extra one was added for studios, and the artist who returns home after ten o'clock, at which hour the elevator stops running, has to spend half the night climbing to his bed among the stars. The old Tenth Street building, which is after all the best of its kind in the city, is having an addition made to it, all of whose space is already engaged. Yet Tenth Street is quite out of the way for art now-a-days. Such an establishment uptown would prove a mint for its owner.

A LOCAL bric-a-brac dealer exhibits in his window an old watch of the warning-pan pattern, with a placard, "watch belonging to Goliath when he fought David." If the Young Men's Christian Association had a museum now, here would be a chance to swell its treasures quite materially.

A SPECIAL grade of shot is now in the market. It is of irregular shape, calculated to make an eccentric mark in wood very like that of the devouring worm, and is called in the trade "antique shot."

METAL shields for wall decoration should be mounted against a plush covered board.